

Elements of Ecosystem Based Management: An Estuarine Case Study

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The historical and contemporary failures of various marine fisheries have led to critical assessments of management practices. Debate over approaches is contentious and varied, yet most agree that sustainability should be a primary goal in fisheries and resource management. Consequently, many now advocate Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) as a new approach to resource management, and numerous governmental, non-profit, and academic studies have called for its implementation. However, attempts to identify and/or implement EBM have been hindered by lack of a clear working definition, and a review of the literature yields numerous conflicting descriptions of this popular management panacea. The goal of our study was to (1) form a conceptual basis for EBM and explicitly describe its criteria and goals, (2) determine whether elements of EBM exist in current practices in Willapa Bay, and (3) compare our findings to case studies of EBM from different systems worldwide. We found that EBM is practiced to some degree across the spectrum of existing management approaches in Willapa Bay. Furthermore, aspects of EBM are ubiquitous across scales of management and are evident in diverse national, state, and regional plans. Our results can be extended to EBM approaches for Puget Sound and the Georgia Basin.